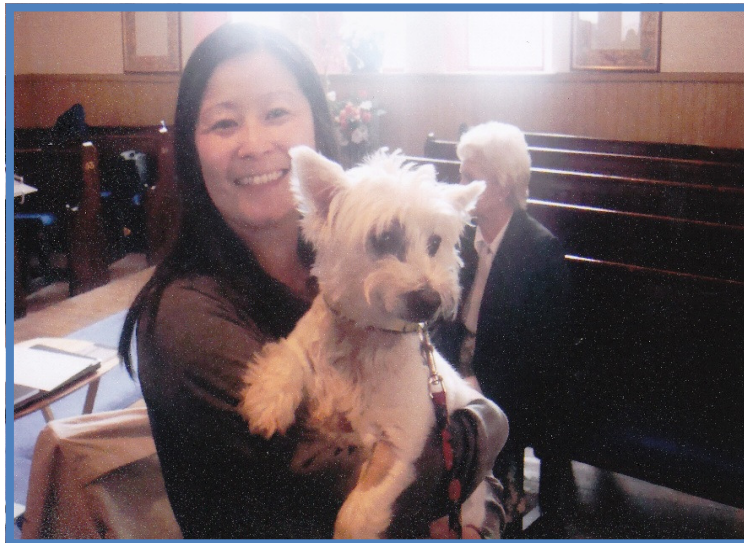


**Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Summer 2013**



**“All are welcome in this place,”
including TJ, who worships with us on a Sunday.**



A message from Kay

I have had four and a half wonderful months with you all. It has been a pleasure and a privilege renewing old friendships and making new ones. Both congregations have made me feel very much at home, welcoming me unreservedly into your midst and making me feel immediately at home with you all.

Each congregation has a unique feeling of worship and at the same time I have enjoyed the very real sense of unity which prevails and that's an achievement to be proud of. Even

if a bit rushed in going from Shieldhill to Muiravonside and

finding ourselves neat for time,

that was never a problem, we were always met with gracious acceptance.

The services in the 'Haining' were a joy to be part of. To have been able to join with members from both churches as they came together as one for the benefit of the residents was quite special.

To have been involved in Sunday worship with you all has been a real blessing, especially Communions, Baptisms, and of course Easter the highlight of the Christian year. The music in both churches bringing a depth and a liveliness to worship. I have loved every minute of it all.

The children are a delight and it has been great fun sharing with them in the children's addresses.

Pastoral visits have been a pleasure and a privilege, meeting and sharing with people who were so grateful to have had a visit. I left feeling I had received more than I had given.

Being invited to the prayer group has been a lovely experience. To join with members of both churches as they prayed for the prayer requests was a privilege indeed.

I can't leave out the cups of tea after the service and the lovely baking courtesy of Louise's Mum. Then there was the Crossford Accordion Band evening which was a wonderful event and I had a lovely evening enjoying your company as well as the music. The Muiravonside Fair was another opportunity to enjoy everyone's company, have a cup of tea and take home some scrumptious cup cakes!

The extra blessing for me was to have been with you all. Meeting again parents of pupils, former pupils and children of pupils from Shieldhill Primary where I taught. Then to be in Muiravonside on the Anniversary of being set apart as a Reader in Muiravonside Parish Church twenty years ago was a most moving experience.

Louise has been the most wonderful Minister to work with. She has encouraged, enabled and inspired me with her preaching and teaching. She has become a valued friend and I will treasure the time I have spent with her always.

Together you show the love of the Lord, the grace of the Lord and you show the joy of the Lord in all that I have experienced with you. Thank you for having me, I will never forget my time with you all. The flowers you gave me are beautiful and look lovely in the front window and I hope give pleasure to people passing by as well as to John and I.

***May God's blessing surround you each day and always.
Love and Blessings, Kay.***

New members

Several people have approached Louise over the last few months enquiring about church membership. If you are interested in becoming a member of Blackbraes and Shieldhill or Muiravonside Churches then please contact the minister by e-mail or telephone. louise.mcclements@virgin.net or tel - 01324 717757

Weddings

**'Meanwhile these three remain -
faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is love.'**

Muiravonside Parish

Alison Taylor and Steven Ramage
at Muiravonside Parish Church
on 28 March

Chris Nimmo and Ashley Gardiner
at Ingleston Country Club, Bishopton
on 17 May

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Arlene Flannagan and Scott McIsaac
at the Vue, Bathgate on 23 March

Funerals

**'The Lord will protect you
as you come and go,
both now and forevermore.'**

Muiravonside Parish

Mr Brian Moore
Mrs Mary Christie
Mr Robert Williamson
Mr William Kane
Mr Alex Gow
Mr William Dalgleish
Mrs Jan Strudwick
Mrs Helen Graham
Mr Alan Johnston

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mrs Sheila Kirkwood
Mrs Margaret McLuckie
Mrs Mary McClung
Mrs Agnes Bryce
Mr William Bryce



Christian Aid

The recent door-to-door collection in Shieldhill and California has raised £1639. This is an excellent amount which reflects the generosity of the villages for this very worthy cause. Thanks are due to all who donated and also to the willing volunteers who collected, counted and banked the money. Fortunately, this year the weather wasn't bad which helped the collectors.

A snack lunch held in the church hall at the start of Christian Aid Week raised a further £75. However, the overall total for Christian Aid will not be finalised until the small money boxes are counted in June.

Marion Zacks, Christian Aid Organiser

Baptisms

'Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name, welcomes me.'

Muiravonside Parish

Hope Josephine Bryson
infant daughter of
George and Katie Bryson
on 24 March

Kelly Hamilton
baptised together with her
children Steven and Sienna
on 28 April

Chase Nimmo
daughter of
Chris and Ashley Nimmo
on 19 May

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Tristan Benjamin Olsson Power
infant son of
Benjamin and Tina Power
on 14 April

Blake Miller MacGowan
infant son of
Peter and Tracey MacGowan
on 12 May



Tea, coffee and a chat are always available in the hall after services.

Please stay if you can.



THE BIG NIGHT OUT!

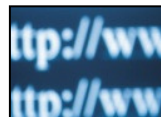
7 Nov 2014

The Three Kings

Michael Buble

And

Robbie Williams



Website

Our magazines are now available on our website www.bsandm-church.org.uk. If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

You can also find photos, news, and the **Minister's Blog** on our website.

Sadly two of our elders at Muiravonside have died recently.

Mr Alex Gow died at Forth Valley Royal Hospital in April after a short illness.

Alex was ordained an elder on the 10th of March 1957, and became Treasurer on 19th November 1969 until 1st July 2000.

Alex then became Treasurer again on 3rd August 2003 until 14th August 2007, when Mrs Moira Sharp was appointed Treasurer.

Alex was a great support to Moira in her first few years as Treasurer and was always willing to give help and advice when required.

Also Mrs Jan Strudwick died at home following an 18month brave battle with cancer. Jan was ordained an elder at Muiravonside on Sunday 7th December 2008 and became Session Clerk on 27th January 2010.

Jan conducted the Muiravonside Choral Society and also made beautiful floral arrangements for the church.

We thank God for Alex and Jan's commitment and service to our Lord's work at Muiravonside Parish Church over the years and their memory will continue to inspire us all in the years ahead.

Louise

Pause for thought - submitted by Rita Braes

Blessed are they who understand my faltering step and palsied hand.
Blessed are they who know my ears today must strain to catch the things they say.

Blessed are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

Blessed are they with a cheery smile who stop to chat for a little while.

Blessed are they who never say "You've told that story twice today"

Blessed are they who know the ways to bring back memories of yesterday.

Blessed are they who make it known that I'm loved and respected and not alone.

Do Something Worthy

“We often get so caught up in our daily business, problems or schedules that it becomes so easy to forget our ultimate priority in life – to live every day trying to make the most of every opportunity to show God our love and thanks through being a biblical witness to a life of love, faith, obedience, sacrifice, surrender, purity and power.”

I Challenge You

I challenge you now at this crisis hour,
To take up your cross in the Saviour's power.
Oh, do something worthy for God and man-
Come sacrifice all for the Saviour's plan.

I challenge you now when the need is great;
I challenge you now when the hour is late!
Remember how brief is your life's short span-
Oh, do something worthy for God and man.

When you see the cross of the Son of God,
When you see the martyrs who shed their blood,
When you o'er your record of living scan,
What have you ever suffered for God and man?

Do you really gladden your Saviour's heart?
Do you share his burden and do your part?
Do you prove to him that your love is true?
What price are you paying to give and do?

Come, do something worthy for Jesus now!
Come finish your crown for his thorn-pierced brow.
Oh, shun not the cross, but complete his plan –
It's now or it's never for God and man.

Quote and poem from “Measure your Life: 17 ways to evaluate your life from God's perspective,” by Wesley Duewel; Zondervan 1992
Also appeared in “First” The magazine of the Faith Mission, Sept/Oct 2010 edition.

Submitted by : Robert Thompson



Guild



The Guild Session finished in April on a high note when we enjoyed an evening of music with the Crossford Scottish Music group. It was a delight to have many members and friends in the audience.

This has been a year of celebration for the Guild and we visited Guild celebrations in local churches. Five members enjoyed an Easter afternoon at Grahamston Guild which was one of the first thirteen Guilds in Scotland.

Mary Ford, retiring National Convener, speaking of this 125 celebration said

“The value of such a celebration lies not in looking back, but in using it as a marker along a journey, a milestone at which we can stop and reflect on where we have been but more importantly look at our map, take a brief rest and then head on with new renewed confidence and enthusiasm”

Mary Ford will address the Summer Rally at Redding and Westquarter Church on 6 June.

We supported the project “Out of Africa into Malta and contributed £116. Refugees fleeing from tragic circumstances in African countries arrive destitute but hopeful in Malta. Project workers try to address their issues and offer ways to rebuild the lives of their families.

Thanks to all members and friends who have supported the Guild this session. Enjoy a refreshing summer break.

I’m sure that September will bring renewed confidence and enthusiasm for the 2013-2014 session, the theme being:

“A Fellowship to Build”

Lorna Coulter

The Final Foe

(1 Corinthians 15: 20-26)

In the face of death I triumph
Not my strength, power or might
But through Christ the risen saviour
He has triumphed in the fight

His the glory and grace
His the victory o'er the foe
Mine to trust, believe and wonder
How he ever loved me so.

Lo the mighty leveller threatens
Rich and poor, high and low
But the almighty Lord of glory
Gives to death its fatal blow.

Come thou everlasting king
Hide me in Thy sovereign grace
Safe inside Thy royal keeping
Till I see Thee face to face.

Robert Thompson



Drew's
view

The Pedals on the Piano

When I was three years old, I had a very unconventional way of playing the piano.

Most children of that tender age become very inquisitive and begin to explore the world around them with a curiosity that is insatiable. Everyday things take on a certain wonder that is only magical in the first years of life. Usually there is one item that especially fascinates them. I was no exception and the item in question was a really ornate piano which had pride of place in the rear sitting room of the house we then lived in at California.

Almost every child would be enchanted by the many black and white keys and would have lots of fun pressing them to see what sounds they produced. I was a bit different.

I was absolutely fascinated by the three pedals at the bottom!

I would crawl under the small bench seat, becoming virtually invisible and spend hours pressing these little neat pedals vigorously up and down with my hands. This happened whether anybody happened to be playing up top - or not - as was most often the case!

There was absolutely no finesse in this operation either. I would launch fearlessly into this task with great gusto. If a stranger was visiting the house, who happened to know nothing about my little hobby and finding themselves within hearing range of the room, decided to take a peek inside, they would be treated to an extremely strange and very loud series of muffled thumps. That would be bad enough, but even more unnerving was that this mysterious noise would seem to be coming from nowhere because no one would be visible in this cosy and unassuming back room!

We had instances of people who were in the house to read the meters, leaving very hastily, probably suspecting that they had just visited the most haunted house in California! My parents knew I would soon get tired of these little "under the piano adventures," and eventually move on to something else.
(Demolishing the coal shed!)

To make matters worse, we had a lady living next door who was a very talented piano teacher. This kindly lady came in often for a cup of tea and of course couldn't resist playing our piano. I played many duets with her. I was down below pressing the pedals and she was up top pressing the keys! She still managed by some miracle to play some beautiful pieces of music, despite my help (or more likely) - hindrance!

This lady was a gentle soul and she took on the unenviable task of patiently trying to interest me in the upper parts of the piano where the keys were. She tried everything to foster an interest in music by playing every kind of song, from my favourite nursery rhymes, to the theme from "Thunderbirds" which was my absolute favourite television show at the time!

A few years later, I had still shown no interest in the piano. My parents had heard that a group of local music students were trying to set up a small band to hone their skills. These young musicians were wondering if anyone had an old piano that they could possibly donate. We were just about to move to another house in Falkirk where there would be much less room. As a result, two sets of prayers were answered. The students got their piano and my parents were delighted that it was going to people who loved music and they would be able to play it for hours on end to their hearts' content.

The three students who turned up to collect the piano had managed to borrow a large open backed van from a friend and they loaded the piano onto the back with lots of hilarity. They were so pleased with their newly acquired instrument that one of them sat on a small stool at the piano on the open back of the van and started to play as they moved off. That day, the whole of Princes Street in California, as well as parts of Main Street, were treated to a very rousing rendition of "Good Golly Miss Molly." This was originally performed by Little Richard and as the frenzied playing echoed round the buildings and receded into the distance, it sounded very good indeed!

My next door neighbour had come out to watch the departure of the piano as well. She was delighted to see the enthusiasm and love that these young people had for the instrument



as they carefully loaded and manoeuvred it with much fun, but absolute care, onto the back of the van. But she looked a little sad as well. She sighed, turned round and said something to me I would never forget,

“Oh, Drew. If only you’d been as interested in the keys as the pedals, what fun you’d have. But never mind. One day you maybe will and if you do, come and see me, even if it’s a long time from now.” Alas, this interest wasn’t to happen until many years later and by that time, this very kind lady had unfortunately moved out of the area.

As a teenager, for a few months I dabbled with an acoustic guitar and found I could produce a few basic keys. I took some elementary music lessons but just didn’t persevere. I found that I got mixed up with the musical terms such as crotchets and quavers. Then I encountered something really exotic called semiquavers and even demi semi quavers. With the impatience of youth, I soon became totally confused with all this.

I quite simply didn’t know my crotchets from my quavers and began to wish so much that my next door neighbour was still around. She would have helped me immensely with her limitless patience and words of encouragement. (After all, ten years earlier she had effortlessly played the piano with me under such testing conditions - and had made it look easy!)

I think if she had still been around I would have carried on. God may close one door, but he has a wonderful way of opening another. Although I finally gave up, the experiences I had led to a new love of listening to music being performed. I had acquired total respect for the dedication and many hours of practice involved not just in learning, but performing. I also marvelled at how lyricists can bring the music to life with words that can make us laugh, or sometimes make us cry. I never cease to be thrilled at how the words and music blend together as one.

One aspect I love most about music is that it plays such a large part in worship and praising God. We all have a favourite hymn. There are so many good hymns to choose from that if I were to ask you which is your favourite, you would probably all choose a completely different one, each with an equally haunting melody and lyrics. Those

special sacred words and music can remain with us from childhood, never forgotten throughout the rest of our lives. Or, equally so, we may have been especially moved by some of the modern hymns, written just a few short years ago. The aspect that impresses me so much about hymns is that they are timeless. They are still around, even in some cases, hundreds of years after they have been written, yet sound as fresh and new as the days in which they were first heard.

One such hymn is “Blessed Assurance,” which we sung a few weeks ago and was written by Frances Jane Crosby, with music by Phoebe Knapp. Blind from the age of six, Frances went on to become one of the most prolific hymn writers in history.

I often think about Frances, a woman who was blind and living in a world of darkness, writing words which are so full of hope and optimism that have brought such comfort to generations of people, accompanied by some of the best music ever written. I know how difficult it must be to write or compose a piece, even with the advantage of sight, but it is truly humbling how difficult this task must be if a person is blind. Frances once commented on her blindness with these moving words:

“It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me.”

(Source: *Christianity.com: Fanny Crosby : America’s Hymn Queen*)

As we sang this beautiful hymn I thought on the thousands of times it must have been enjoyed over the years. So much has happened. Kings and Queens have come and gone. So many advances have been made, both in medicine and technology. Times have changed almost out of recognition since the summer of 1873, when “Blessed Assurance,” first appeared in the July edition of “Palmer’s Guide to Holiness and Revival Miscellany.” (Source – *Wikipedia : Blessed Assurance*)

And yet like so many of its contemporaries, “Blessed Assurance” has stood the test of time and still brings as much comfort and hope to the twenty-first century church as it did to its Victorian predecessors. I

often wonder what Frances would say if she had known back then that her hymn would still be sung in the year 2013 and that it would be just as popular as it was in her time. I'm sure she would be so proud and absolutely thrilled. Music means so much to people for so many different reasons. It has the power to heal and uplift the spirit in the form of a beautiful hymn. It can bring joy in the form of a rousing melody. But most of all, it can inspire and bring hope where there was none.

I often drive past the house we had in California with its large back room that holds a treasure chest of memories. How I wish that my next door neighbour was still there. If only I could tell her how right she was and that I wish I had listened to her when she so gently and patiently tried to nurture an interest in music.

I still have a long discarded electronic keyboard up in the loft. So who knows? Maybe there's still time...

* * * * *

National Stewardship Programme

Here are the latest free will offerings for Blackbraes and Shieldhill:

	2012	2013
January	£1576.75	£1312.70
February	£1467.60	£1567.45
March	£1912.50	£1799.10

The new cooker

The Congregational Board would like to thank everyone who gave so generously to the Cooker Fund.

The cooker has been installed, along with a new microwave oven and the kitchen has been painted.

Thanks to all who gave their time to organise the delivery and fitting of the cooker. I'm sure the cooker will make a big difference to all the organisations who use it.

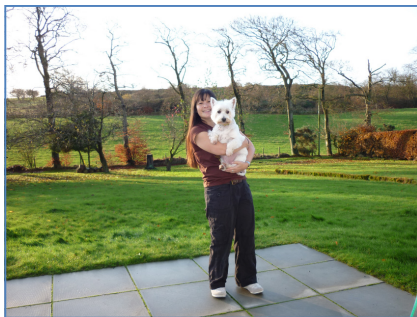
Christine Jones

Introducing ... Caroline Baker

I was born and brought up in Coventry in the West Midlands. I have fond memories from a young age of going to church including Sunday School, Brownies and Girl Guides at St Mary Magdalen's in Chapelfields which was known locally as the "Church with the blue roof". One of my early memories is of my Christening when I was six years old. It was a joint service with my brother who was five and thought he was going to have his hair washed in the Baptism font! We wore t-shirt and shorts. My brother had a Batman t-shirt and I wore a Muppet Show one! Not exactly "Sunday best" but it was my best t-shirt and I loved it!

I left Coventry at the age of eighteen when I went to University in Sheffield. After graduating, I moved to Wrexham in North Wales for work. I stayed there for the next 16 years. In 2004, I met my, then, husband to be, Jon, when we both attended Brighton University on a part-time course. We remained friends after the course finished but didn't start going out until four years after we first met! When we were first together, I still lived in Wrexham and Jon lived in Overton near Basingstoke so he would travel to Wrexham every Friday night and back on Sunday (a 400 mile round trip). So when Jon got a job offer in Bathgate and I was offered a promotion to Bathgate, we decided to move to Scotland after only being together for 9 months!

In March 2009, Jon and I moved to Scotland with our dog TJ Westie. At first we stayed in Strathloanhead near Avonbridge and then moved to Shieldhill in January 2010. By the time we moved to Shieldhill, I



hadn't attended church for a long while. But in March 2010, on hearing of the death of my Godfather, I felt that I needed to go to church to seek comfort from God. I searched for a local church on the internet and found that the nearest Church of Scotland church was in the village. I looked on

the church website and noted the time of the Sunday service and went along the following week.

On attending Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church for the first time, I was pleased to find that everyone was friendly and welcoming. I was quite surprised that the church was so small but this added to the friendly, close neighbourly atmosphere. I am now proud to call many of those who made me feel so welcome as dear friends. I became a member of Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church in April 2011.

In August 2011, Jon and I got married. It was a big decision for us as to where to get married; Coventry, Pontypool (Jon's home town), Shieldhill or abroad. We were so pleased that Louise was able to conduct the ceremony for us in the church and are glad that we chose to get married in Shieldhill. Many of our friends and family were able to attend from near and far.

My dog TJ has been a major part of my life for the past eleven years and in February of this year, I felt that she could benefit from my faith and prayers in church so I decided to take her to a Sunday church service. Whenever she goes to church, she is quiet and well behaved, which is very surprising as anyone who knows her knows that she is normally badly behaved! TJ is happy to sit quietly through the service or doze peacefully on my lap!



During Sunday services, I particularly enjoy the Children's talks and hymns as these often remind me of my childhood. I also like catching up with my friends at church. I often wonder if I would have re-started attending church had we not moved to Shieldhill, but I also think that it was God's will.

I felt very privileged when I was asked to become an Elder this year. At first, I thought it may be difficult to carry out the duties in

conjunction with my three jobs. I work full-time as a Quality Assurance Manager of a pharmaceutical facility at the University of Edinburgh, part-time at the Clinical Research Imaging Centre based at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary site and part-time on an exam body panel as an Assessor in London. But I know that God will guide me and help me find the time so I am now looking forward to becoming an Elder in the summer and this is where my faith journey continues.....

The Language of the Strings

We bring harmony and peace wherever we play,
with hymns that soothe tormented souls.
No language barriers to bridge or surpass,
the music speaks the language of God's love.

This love is pure, joyous and serene,
it knows no bounds and no pretensions
The gentle music translates with tranquillity,
an unexpected haven amongst the hurricane of life.

Each of these strings has its story to tell,
all playing a part in peaceful pianissimo.
Frenetic fortissimo is not welcome here,
this is a player and instrument of refinement.

We go together well and blend as one,
a violin so fine and a player so demure.
Bringing God's love to one and all,
with the delicate language of the strings.

By Drew Robertson



Notes from a Shieldhill Garden



***'We grow and flourish like a wild flower,
then the wind blows on it, and it is gone-no one sees
it again. The love of the lord lasts forever. Psalm 103 verses 15
and 16.***

I wander'd lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils.

The Wordsworth poem jumped into my head this week as the countryside welcomed the host of golden daffodils. The cold, wet weather followed by late snows had us thinking that there would be no daffodils this year. That was not the case as early types flowered along side the later ones creating spectacular displays of lemon, cream and white.

Daffodils have been around for a very long time. They belong to the narcissus family.

There is a story in Greek mythology that tells of Narcissus. Narcissus was beautiful young man who could not return the love of any of his admirers. He considered them to be unworthy of his companionship. The gods became tired of his behavior and so, one day when he stopped beside a pool, he saw his face in the still waters. He tried to kiss the image in the water but, of course, the harder that he tried, the faster his image disappeared. Narcissus stayed beside the pool becoming gaunt and losing his beauty. When he died, he disappeared into the pool. A daffodil is said to have grown on the spot where he died.

Modern daffodils are separated into thirteen groups. Group 1 is all the large cupped daffodils that have one flower on a single stem. The remaining groups have daffodils with differing sized cups and varying numbers of heads per stem.

Daffodils contain a poison called lycorine. This is found in the bulbs and leaves. They cause sickness if eaten. This usually happens when the bulbs have been mistaken for onions. Daffodil bulbs do not smell

nor do they make the eyes run, as onions do. Some florists who handle a lot of daffodils get dermatitis.

In Brecon in Powys, daffodils are grown commercially. Galantamine is extracted from the plant and this is used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Wild daffodils are found today in a few areas of England and Wales. The wild cultivar is smaller than the garden varieties being between 4 and 6 inches in height. Hybridization with daffodils that are planted in the countryside is the biggest threat to the survival of the wild variety.

People who are concerned about poisonous plants in the garden, the following web address gives helpful advice:

www.thepoisoningarden.co.uk and "Is That Cat Dead" by John Robertson is a book that deals with this problem. Many vets' waiting rooms have posters that inform about plants that are poisonous for our pets.

Spring magazine. There was a mistake in the tomato sauce recipe. The herb Oregano; not 'paper' that was suggested can be used to flavour the tomato sauce.

Eco Congregations

Because of some of the things that our Church does I think, that with a little effort we could become an Eco Congregation.



To date, there are four Eco Congregations in Falkirk District: Erskine, Falkirk Old and St Modan's, Grahamston United and Larbert East. In order to gain and award, we have a questionnaire to fill in, be able to show that we had helped the whole congregation make a link between their Christian faith and environmental concerns, had and impact on the local or wider community.

We would be working for our first award and so we will be able to submit projects that have already been undertaken prior to registering with Eco-Congregations. The Christian Aid work that is undertaken by this congregation and the Three Kings' Event that the young people

organized are examples of things that we could include in our report when we apply for our first award.

The first step is registering with Eco-Congregations. We would then be linked with a mentor from another Eco Congregation. Should we decide as a Church to try to get this award, I would hope that various groups from our Church family would be involved. I hope to visit the Eco Congregation stand at Heart and Soul on Sunday 20th and to get some leaflets and things there.

An Eco Congregation can be any size, from small country churches to large city churches. Eco Congregations in Scotland stretch from The Scottish Borders to The Shetland Isles.

Please visit www.ecocongregationscotland.org for more information.

Rena Moore

Grand Sale

The Welcome In Committee are organising a Grand Sale to take place in the Welfare Hall, Shieldhill on Saturday 14 September from 1.30-3.30pm. Stalls will include toys, crafts, fancy goods, jewellery, tombola, 'Guess the cost of the shopping', raffles, face painting, teas etc. There will be an admission charge of 50p for adults, 20p for children.

Donations for any of the above stalls will be very welcome (**No clothes, books, videos or bric-a-brac please**). The church hall will be open every Saturday in August between 11am and 12 noon for donations to be handed in. Also, if anyone would like to offer to help in any way with the sale, please speak to one of the Committee members.

Marion Zacks

The Final Lap of the Journey

The next part of our journey would take us inland to Death Valley, Yosemite National Park, Napa Valley and a final 2 nights in San Francisco, before flying home.

While driving to Death Valley from Las Vegas - a journey of about 4 hours, we watched the outside temperature rise up and up. Eventually we took a photograph of the car thermometer when it reached 104 degrees. It did rise higher - totally unbearable. Death Valley has outstanding natural beauty. Our first stop was to Dantes View. We walked up this rocky outcrop. The view of the surrounding mountains and valley was magnificent, however the heat was so great, we could not stay out in it for long. Our base for the night was Furnace Creek where there was a golf course. How anyone can play golf in those temperatures beats me. But there were a few out on the course trundling around in their golf buggies. With hindsight, if we were to miss out one stopover it would have been this one, as you could not do anything due to the excessive heat.

Next stop was Yosemite National Park, a place definitely not to be missed. Before leaving home we pre-booked a guided tour. Our tour guide was a little eccentric to say the least, but very knowledgeable about Yosemite. He pointed out the Bridalveil Falls, where water cascades over the falls and with the sprays going out to either side, it represents a bride's veil. However at the time of our visit there was little or no water, so we did not see the full effect. There are many water falls in the park and some had no water flowing over them at all. This was due to the time of year and the streams and river being low. El Capitan is a huge slab of rock tower 3600 feet and is believed to be the largest single block of granite in the world. Hardy souls can be seen climbing this rock face. It takes 2/3 days to reach the summit. The climbers take all their food with them and sleep in a hammock which is secured to the rock by an expanding type spring. The hammering in of pitons is not allowed. Half Dome, first climbed in 1875 by George Anderson a miner, blacksmith and tourist guide, can be climbed if you are fit enough. Led by a guide, 30 people per day are allowed up. Access is by a rope type ladder with chain hand rails at either side. When standing on Glacier Point you see the people on Half Dome. They look like little ants.

At different points during the day we stopped and our guide pointed out climbers on the various different rock faces. We had to use binoculars to pick them out. Next day we went sightseeing on our own to see the giant sequoias at Mariposa Grove with names such as California Tunnel Tree which was originally bored out to allow wagons through. The Faithful Couple, The Clothespin Tree, The Bachelor and the Three Graces - all very different but all very interesting. The Pioneer Centre was a museum of all things from Wild West days carriages like the type you see on the cowboy films. There are also shacks and places of work which give you an insight as to how the folk use to live. It must have been a very hard life. On returning to our hotel, we again met up with Moira and John Nicol whom we had said goodbye to 4 days earlier in Las Vegas. Another enjoyable evening was had by all. We will next meet them in San Francisco.

The next stop on our tour was Napa Valley, one of the wine regions of California. By now the surroundings were more bearable. The scenery was green and luscious. We drove past many wines groves and tasted various wines. This was just a one night stay, so there was little time for further sightseeing.

The onward trip to San Francisco was exciting due to the volume of traffic. However we arrived safely and deposited our trusty 4 x 4 at the depot in the middle of San Francisco. Again, Mrs Sat Nav came up trumps. Our hotel was just a short distance away, so we just walked here again we were to meet up with John and Moira. As it was well into the afternoon when we arrived, we just had a quick walk around before going out for our evening meal to the very appropriately named restaurant " Johns Place " which had been recommended and was booked prior to leaving Scotland. The meal was delicious.

Next day we had a lazy day looking for souvenirs to bring home. We did an open top bus trip which is always great and very informative. We took in China Town, The Botanic Gardens and The Golden Gate Bridge. The evening was taken up with a trip to The Rock " Alcatraz ". Originally named by Spanish Explorer Jaun Manuel de Ayala the first lighthouse of the Pacific Coast began in 1854, 1915. It formally became the Pacific Branch of the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks a military prison. In 1934, it was transferred from the War Dept to the Dept of Justice and now became a federal penitentiary, housing famous bad

boys such as Al Capone. Each cell had its own basic toilet facilities an innovation at that time. Closure was ordered in 1963 and was designated as part of the Golden Gate National Park. In 1962, 3 men escaped using raincoats as flotation devices. However to date, they have never come forward and were proclaimed drowned. All too soon, it was time to get the ferry back to the mainland and another enjoyable meal with John and Moira, then home to bed in preparation for our flight home the next day.

When we boarded our flight the first air hostess to greet us was Scottish. At that moment tears were in my eyes and I said it's great to hear a Scottish voice. Although we had a wonderful holiday, it was great to know that we were heading to be with family and friends and to look after our grandson Riley for a week, while his parents completed their honeymoon, and back to Auld Clathes and Purridge.

Moira Sharp

Atheist in the woods

An atheist was walking through the woods. 'What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!' he said to himself.

As he was walking alongside the river, he heard a rustling in the bushes behind him. He turned to look. He saw a 7-foot grizzly bear charge towards him.



He ran as fast as he could up the path. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the bear was closing in on him. He looked over his shoulder again and the bear was even closer. He tripped and fell on the ground.

He rolled over to pick himself up but saw that the bear was right on top of him, reaching for him with his left paw and raising his right paw to strike him.



At that instant the atheist cried out, 'Oh my God!'

Time stopped. The bear froze. The forest was silent. As a bright light shone upon the man, a voice came out of the sky.

'You deny my existence for all these years, teach others I don't exist and even credit creation to cosmic accident. 'Do you expect me to help you out of this predicament? Am I to count you as a believer?'

The atheist looked directly into the light, 'It would be hypocritical of me to suddenly ask you to treat me as a Christian now, but perhaps you could make the BEAR a Christian?'

'Very well,' said the voice. The light went out. The sounds of the forest resumed. And the bear dropped his right paw, brought both paws together, bowed his head and spoke:



'For what I am about to receive, may the Lord make me truly thankful, Amen.'